

# ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

March 20, 2013

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## **Bill to halt school consolidation fails (Pine Bluff Commercial)**

LITTLE ROCK — Legislation proposing a two—year moratorium on school consolidations in the state failed in a House committee Tuesday.

House Bill 1938 by Rep. Randy Alexander, R-Springdale, received 10 “yes” votes and seven “no” votes in the House Education Committee. The bill needed 11 favorable votes to advance to the House floor.

The bill would halt school consolidations for two years to allow time for a study of how the mergers have affected student transportation and administrative reorganization.

“We need to have some good information to evaluate this,” Alexander told the committee, arguing that since a 2004 law went into effect requiring merger of school districts that fall below 350 enrollment, more than 50 schools have been closed with no definitive studies conducted to determine how the closings have affected the transportation of students and the merging of school administrations.

Several parents and supporters of Weiner schools attended the meeting in support of the bill.

The Weiner School District was annexed into the Harrisburg district in 2010 when enrollment fell below 350 students. Earlier this month, the state Board of Education voted to allow the Harrisburg district to close Weiner High School.

Arkansas Education Commission Tom Kimbrell spoke against Alexander’s bill Tuesday. He said several schools could be forced to consolidate in the next few years and that a two-year moratorium would mean some schools struggling academically or financially would remain open.

Deputy state Attorney General General Scott Richardson told the committee a study on the ramifications of consolidation could be done, but not while a moratorium is in place.

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## **Son of test cheating ringleader pleads guilty (WMC, Memphis)**

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) - A Memphis teacher has pleaded guilty to being part of a test-taking fraud ring led by his father.

The U.S. attorney's office said Tuesday that Clarence Mumford Jr. pleaded guilty to aiding and abetting identification fraud in Memphis federal court.

Prosecutors say Mumford paid someone to take a Praxis teacher certification test on his behalf. Mumford was able to use a passing score to obtain his Tennessee teacher's license.

Mumford's father, Clarence Mumford Sr., has pleaded guilty to fraud for arranging for people to take certification exams on behalf of aspiring teachers in Arkansas, Mississippi and Tennessee over a 15-year period. Mumford has acknowledged accepting payment for hiring the test takers and making false identifications for them.

Both men will be sentenced later this year.

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### **School board offers Redfield principal new role (White Hall Progress)**

The White Hall School Board voted March 12 to extend contracts to three assistant superintendents, two education supervisors and all principals, including James Kight, who heads up Redfield Middle School, scheduled to close at the end of the school year, Superintendent Larry Smith said.

Kight, who had publicly stated earlier that he had planned to retire June 30, was offered a contract to serve as assistant principal one-half of each school day at White Hall middle school and high school, Smith said, or the equivalent to a full-time contract.

Arkansas school districts send out certified contract extensions early in the calendar year and target receiving signed contracts no later than May, giving administrators summer months to fill any vacancies created by resignations and retirements.

In other action last week, the school board:

- Recognized senior Rachel Box and junior Ja’Lisa Allen, members of the girls’ basketball team named to the 5A South All-Conference Team.
- Accepted the low bid of \$77,688 from Diamond State Bus Sales for a 2014 International school bus. The new bus will replace one that will be moved to “spare status.” A 1997 “spare” model will be retired and sold by bid.

Smith briefed board members on proposed changes in the Arkansas Activities Association rules for extracurricular activity eligibility for home schooled students, noting that the state association of school boards developed the policy to help local boards determine if and under what circumstances “this can occur.”

White Hall directors will receive a policy recommendation at a future meeting, Smith said.

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### **AR Lawmaker Wants Easier School-Rating System (KARK, Channel 4)**

Video available at [http://arkansasmatters.com/fulltext/?nxd\\_id=646812](http://arkansasmatters.com/fulltext/?nxd_id=646812))

LITTLE ROCK, AR -- An Arkansas Senator is proposing an easier way to understand how your child's school is rated.

As it stands now, the State Department of Education rates schools using several phrases, but Senator Jim Hendren says he wants to see Arkansas schools be given a letter grade ranging from "A" to "F."

"I think by doing something that simple and that basic, it will challenge schools that are struggling and highlight schools that are achieving," Hendren says. "So it will be good for parents, good for the community and it will be good for the schools."

Hendren's bill is likely to be presented on Thursday.

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### **Families in West Memphis school rape allegation speak out (WREG, Memphis)**

(West Memphis, Arkansas) – “It’s been a hard thing for us, so hard and unbelievable,” says a distraught aunt who is brought to tears over what happened to her 15-year-old nephew in a bathroom at West Memphis High School last month.

The child she has raised as a son told her he had been raped by three other boys .

The special education student, says he told school administrators but they told him to go back to class and it will be handled the next morning.

West Memphis High School Principal Jon Collins says the victim only told them the boys tried to take his money.

“On the outset we were not dealing with a sexual assault. We were dealing with three special education kids in a restroom that were skipping class,” says Collins.

He says police later told him about the rape claim and the school immediately began to work with police on the case.

The principal says all the students are in special education and their parents were contacted, but the school chose not to alert the rest of the parents at the high school.

Marry McVay is the guardian and aunt of 15-year-old suspect Orlando Hamilton. She says the school never told her about the accusations against her nephew, but she was contacted by police.

She said her nephew wasn’t involved.

“He was telling me he didn’t do anything. He didn’t touch the boy or nothing like that. All he tried to do was help the boy,” says McVay.

“They all just need help. My nephew, the victim, the children who done this. They need help,” says the aunt of the victim.

The three suspects, 17-year-old Kenneth Bedford, 16-year-old Terrence Jones and 15-year-old Orlando Hamilton, are in alternative school and will be in court April 29.

The victim is now being home schooled.

One school board member says the board was not told about the rape allegation, but Principal Collins says the superintendent’s office was informed.

Now they are going over policies to see if changes are needed.

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### **Education notebook (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

Registration dates posted to Internet

The Pulaski County Special School District has announced March and April school-registration dates and places for new and returning students for the 2013-14 school year.

The times and dates are listed on the district’s website at [pcssd.org](http://pcssd.org).

Parents and guardians should register their children at the schools the students will attend, except for fifth-grade students, who may check in at their elementary schools, said Brenda Bowles, the district's assistant superintendent for equity and pupil services.

Documents necessary for registering students returning to the district include a proof of residency - such as a recent utility bill, a Little Rock Air Force Base housing verification form, home-purchase closing papers or lease agreements.

Required documents for registering a new student in the district are a birthcertificate or an appropriate substitute, such as a registrar statement, baptismal certificate, passport or military identification. Also required are previous school records, immunization records, a transcript or last report card and Social Security card. Proof of residency must also be provided. Parents who do not wish to reveal their child's Social Security number will be provided an alternate number for their child.

More information about school registration is available by calling the Office of Equity and Pupil Services at (501) 234-2020 or (501) 234-2021.

#### Fort Smith chief joins U.S. board

Benny Gooden, superintendent of the Fort Smith School District, was elected to the board of directors for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which is based in Arlington, Va.

The National Board is responsible for awarding national certification to eligible teachers.

National Board certification requires that teachers demonstrate advanced teaching knowledge, skills and practices.

A total of 2,329 Arkansas teachers have achieved National Board certification.

In addition to his Fort Smith job, Gooden serves as president of the American Association of School Administrators.

Gooden previously was a superintendent in Boonville, Mo., and Crawford County, Mo. He also has served as an assistant superintendent, high school principal, assistant principal and secondary vocal and instrumental music instructor. He is a former Arkansas Superintendent of the Year, an award from the Association of School Administrators.

Gooden joins a prestigious group of education professionals on the National Board's board of directors, including former West Virginia Gov. Bob Wise and the presidents of the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association.

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#### **Magnolia district hires search firm (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

MAGNOLIA - The Magnolia School Board has decided to hire the McPherson and Jacobson executive search firm of Omaha, Neb., to begin the search for a new superintendent.

John Moore, the current superintendent, said Feb. 11 that he is retiring in June 2014.

Moore became superintendent of the 2,725-student Magnolia School District in 1996. He previously served as an assistant superintendent in the North Little Rock School District.

Several school boards in Arkansas have used the McPherson and Jacobson firm recently in their superintendent searches, including school systems in Little Rock, North Little Rock and Texarkana.

The firm is helping three other Arkansas school boards - Augusta, Smackover and West Memphis - to find candidates for superintendent vacancies, according to the firm's website.

The contract with the Magnolia School Board is for \$9,500 plus expenses.